

8 March 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Proposed Organizational Concept for AQUATONE

1. Need for Advance Planning: Although the earliest operations under this program will probably not be mounted from overseas bases until February or March of 1956, some urgency attaches to the development of firm plans for the organizational structure which will then be required. This urgency derives most of all from the need to select well in advance during the procurement phase the individuals who are to be assigned to the more important positions that will be needed in the subsequent operational phase. Moreover, the period when the aircraft are being tested and pilots are being trained should be one in which the operational organization itself is tested prior to the commencement of activities overseas. Finally, it must be emphasized that the working out of organizational details can be a time consuming process even after the basic concept has been determined. The purpose of this paper is, in the light of these considerations, to outline a proposed organizational concept.

2. Assumptions Concerning the Scale and Technical Character of Operations: There are two circumstances either of which singly, or both of which in combination, will ultimately compel the suspension of operations, and which may do so long before even the higher priority intelligence targets have been covered. These are, first, the development of counter measures so effective as to render overflight missions unacceptably hazardous and, second, a political reaction by the enemy after his discovery that overflights are being conducted so threatening or carrying such menace to the political position of the United States as to result in a political decision to halt overflights. The probability of one or the other or both of these responses will increase with the passage of time after operations have commenced. Accordingly, it is assumed in general that operations will not be undertaken until a considerable capability (in the form of both aircraft and pilots) has been accumulated and that once undertaken, missions will be flown with the greatest feasible frequency at least until high priority targets have been covered. The following are a number of more specific assumptions which depend in part on this one:

a. Operations will be conducted from two to four rear bases, at each of which there will have to be provision for maintenance of aircraft and of photographic and electronic equipment, basing of personnel, flight planning and possibly other functions. Such bases may be needed in northern Europe, the eastern Mediterranean, [REDACTED] the Philippine Islands, Alaska and Thule, although it is highly doubtful whether operations will ever be conducted out of more than three, or at the most four, bases simultaneously. It is possible that one rear base in Europe rather than one in northern Europe and one in eastern Mediterranean will suffice.

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b. As a rule, actual missions will be flown from forward staging bases, or else reconnaissance aircraft will be towed or carried by other aircraft and released close to the enemy's border. Provision will have to be made, therefore, for the operational use of suitable large cargo aircraft and of other aircraft capable of towing or carrying the reconnaissance vehicle.

c. It will be necessary to transport eventually as many as fifteen reconnaissance aircraft, together with sizeable numbers of personnel and considerable maintenance equipment from the ZI to rear bases overseas. Moreover, different rear bases will be used at different times and there will probably be a net movement of reconnaissance aircraft from certain bases to others (especially from west to east) in the course of missions that traverse enemy territory from one base to another. Accordingly, there will be a heavy and continuing requirement for air transportation between bases.

3. The Clandestine Character of the Operation: In general, actual overflight missions are to be conducted as clandestine operations. There is little possibility, however, that these overflights will not sooner or later be detected by the enemy, although in the development of the aircraft and in flight planning every effort will be made to maximize altitudes within the enemy's radar frontier and thus to minimize detection. Not only is it possible that specific missions will sooner or later be detected but, if and when they are, the enemy will certainly be aware that they are being conducted by [REDACTED] the United States Government. Under these circumstances, the operation as a whole can be clandestine only in the sense that the U. S. Government will at all times be in a position plausibly to deny that it has undertaken this activity. So long as the only evidence that the enemy could adduce to support a charge against the U. S. is a record of observations of its own radar or visual search installations, plausible denial will still be feasible. Accordingly, the two basic security requirements are:

a. That neither enemy agents nor unauthorized people in third countries should acquire any evidence which would indicate from what bases missions were being flown or which would demonstrate any kind of official U. S. support, and,

b. That, in the event of the loss of an aircraft over enemy territory, enemy authorities should be unable to prove U. S. official support for the operation.

4. Assumptions as to the Political Arrangements and Cover for the Operation: A basic fact which will condition the organizational structure for this operation is that three out of a possible five rear bases will be in the territory of foreign nations whose sovereignty has been recognized by the United States and that any advanced staging bases likely to be employed in Europe or in Southeast Asia will be similarly situated. In the

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light of this fact, the following are the political and other arrangements assumed to be necessary in order to maintain the possibility of plausible denial:

a. The rear bases will in all cases be USAF installations where the facilities and personnel required for this operation can be installed and maintained [REDACTED] without the necessity of special additional arrangements with the local governments. In the case of any rear base in northern Europe, however, and possibly of a rear base in the eastern Mediterranean [REDACTED] [REDACTED] it will prove to be difficult or impossible to keep all knowledge of the project from intelligence officers of the local government.

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b. No forward or staging base in northern Europe, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] could be used without the knowledge and consent of the local government. Even with the consent and cooperation of the local government, it would be difficult to conduct operations unobtrusively at such forward bases (which is one of the main reasons for using them only briefly as staging areas.)

c. Virtually all of the foreign governments in whose territories either rear or forward staging bases will be located would be sensitive about any operations conducted from their territories overtly by regular U. S. Military personnel. There might also be legal and/or policy objections on the part of U. S. departments to such employment of regular U. S. Military personnel.

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5. Assumptions as to Procurement, Personnel, and Processing of Data:

Although arrangements on these matters are far from complete, they will have an obvious bearing on organizational structure. Accordingly, the following

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assumptions have been made:

a. Airframes, photographic reconnaissance equipment, and electronic equipment, together with spares are being procured and financed by the CIA. GFE including especially engines, spare parts therefor, and certain standard photographic reconnaissance equipment (which will be modified for use in this project) is being procured by the Air Force.

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b. The CIA will procure [REDACTED] specialized supplies such as photographic film and electronic tape. The CIA is also procuring specialized field maintenance equipment from the suppliers.

c. All primary mission pilots will be civilians recruited and employed by the CIA.

d. Personnel for the maintenance of primary mission aircraft and of photographic and electronic equipment will be recruited and trained by the suppliers. In the field, they will be contract employees of the CIA.

e. Operational supporting aircraft required for towing or carrying and for transportation of personnel, equipment, and primary mission aircraft to and from staging bases will be provided and maintained by the Air Force.

f. Air crews for such operational support aircraft and any maintenance personnel especially assigned to them will be U. S. Air Force personnel.

g. The Air Force will supply supporting technical and logistical services where it can do so more readily than the CIA in accordance with detailed plans to be developed.

h. Responsibility for the procurement of current non-specialized supplies, notably fuel and maintenance personnel, will be divided by the Air Force and the CIA on the basis of convenience and security. The costs of these supplies will be borne as may be agreed.

i. The CIA will secure and equip special laboratory facilities in the ZI to process all photographic film.

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7. Proposed Organizational Concept: One possibility for AQUATONE would be to follow essentially the same organizational pattern that has been developed in connection with other CIA air activities, with modifications to take account of the character of this project. This would involve CIA units at overseas bases paralleled by supporting Air Force units and in Washington the centralization of authority over project activities within the two agencies in offices which would cooperate intimately with one another. Alternatively, the pattern could be varied to provide for a more closely integrated structure. This would be a joint task force with headquarters in Washington and units overseas; it would include all CIA and Air Force personnel assigned to the project. Although there are considerable theoretical differences between these two patterns, they would amount to nearly the same thing in practice. The main positions to be filled will be about the same whichever is adopted. There is, therefore, no pressing need to choose between them at this time. A proposed structure is outlined below on the basis of each alternative. The two following considerations will apply to either:

a. Since operations at the several bases will be closely interdependent (notably in the case of missions which originate at one base and terminate at another), a considerable degree of control will have to be maintained at a central project headquarters. This operational necessity will be buttressed by the need to maintain close and continuous policy control over the project by the senior policymakers of this Government. Both considerations point to a central project headquarters in Washington. This would in any case be the logical location so far as the CIA is concerned. In the event that the concept finally adopted is that of paralleling but not completely integrating CIA and Air Force organizations, it will be essential that the officer immediately in charge of Air Force participation be stationed in Washington and that he have adequate authority to deal directly with the CIA (and with other Government agencies) on the project.

b. In the interest both of operational efficiency and of effective control of overflight activities, lines of command should run directly from the joint, or the two paralleling, project headquarters in Washington to operational units in the field. It will presumably be necessary to establish liaison with theater commanders but the activities here contemplated are peacetime clandestine intelligence gathering operations which are not subject to theater commanders' direction and control, and the considerations of policy involved extend far beyond the scope of,

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and have little relevance to, any single theater. Apart from a liaison relationship with theater commanders, security considerations will probably forbid the use of established command channels in either the CIA or the Air Force. It will be necessary to limit to only one or two selected individuals within each organization unit from which the project draws support, knowledge of its nature and purpose.

8. Organizational Structure with Separate, Paralleling Organizations: Under this concept, there will be a project organization within CIA to which personnel will be assigned; and there will presumably be a Special Activities Group established in the Air Force, either within one of the operational commands or reporting directly to the air staff, to conduct, or as appropriate to arrange for, all Air Force activities on the project. Specialized personnel in such fields as aeromedical and meteorology who can best be furnished by the Air Force for service both in the ZI and at overseas bases can either be assigned to the CIA for the duration of the project and serve in the CIA project organization or be assigned to the Air Force Special Activities Group and work in cooperation with parallel CIA units.

a. The CIA organization will consist of a project headquarters in Washington together with initially two and later three Air Sections in the field, each assigned to a particular rear base. The organization will have its own T/O apart from the operating divisions at CIA headquarters and the regular CIA field stations. The line of command will be directly from project headquarters to the Special Air Sections and will not run through either divisions or field stations.

(1) The project headquarters will have general control over the project and will be responsible specifically for continuing liaison with other departments, for the clearance as appropriate of operational plans, for the direction of continuing CIA procurement and recruitment, and, in conjunction with the Air Force, for operational planning. The headquarters will have three major sections:

Operations, will perform its major functions jointly with the headquarters of the Air Force Special Activities Group, with the equivalent section of which it will constitute a joint planning group. It will have responsibility for operational planning, weather, intelligence, targets, and medical. The senior CIA officer will also be responsible (outside of the Joint Planning Group) for personnel functions with respect to civilian pilots.

Materiel, including design and development, procurement, and Legal and financial functions with respect to procurement.

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Administration, including organizational planning, security, fiscal procedures, personnel functions with respect to all regular CIA personnel and civilian contract maintenance employees, and Headquarters to rear base communications.

(2) Each CIA Air Section will be organized in two principal sections, operations and administration. The Operations Officer, who will also serve as general deputy to the Chief of the Section, will have responsibility for civilian air crews for primary mission aircraft, operational communications, and, jointly with the Air Force Special Flight, mission planning and intelligence. The Materiel and Administration Officer will be responsible for the maintenance of primary mission aircraft, security, communications (Message Center), CIA financial activities, and, jointly with the Air Force Special Flight, supply.

b. The Special Activities Group in charge of Air Force participation will presumably have its headquarters in Washington and will include initially two and later three Special Flights, one assigned to each overseas base at which a CIA Air Section is located. All Air Force personnel on the project will be assigned to the Special Activities Group.

(1) The headquarters of the Special Activities Group will be responsible for all Air Force activities in support of AQUATONE. It will give direction to the Flights stationed at overseas bases in the performance of the functions listed below. Its main task, however, will probably be to arrange for support from a number of other Air Force components in the ZI. Specifically, it will have to provide for continuing Air Force procurement, Air Force logistical support for both Air Force and CIA units at overseas bases, the assignment of Air Force personnel to the Special Activities Group as required, and any continuing Air Force developmental activities. The headquarters of the Special Activities Group will also have important liaison functions with other parts of the Government. It will collaborate with the CIA project headquarters in operational and organizational planning. The Special Activities Group Headquarters might well have three sections corresponding to those in the CIA Project Headquarters. The Operations Section would consist of either the Chief or the Deputy Chief of the joint operational planning group and those members of the group to be contributed by the Air Force, probably including a meteorologist and intelligence officer. The Materiel Section might be limited to one or two officers concerned with the remaining development and procurement activities. The Administration Section would be responsible for fiscal procedures, personnel functions with respect to all Air Force personnel and other appropriate activities.

(2) Each Air Force Special Flight will man and maintain the operational cargo aircraft required at each base. It may be required

to furnish other kinds of support in the field and will be the channel through which the CIA Air Section obtains logistical support and such supporting services as weather information from the Air Force. Each Special Flight might be organized in a manner parallel to the CIA Air Section in the two principal sections: Operations and Administration. The former will be responsible for Air Force air crews for operational cargo aircraft, and, jointly with the CIA Air Section, for mission planning and intelligence. The Administration Section will be responsible for the maintenance of operational cargo aircraft, adjutant activities, Air Force administrative and financial matters, housekeeping for both the Special Flight and the CIA Air Section, and, jointly with the CIA Air Section, for supply.

c. The CIA project headquarters and the headquarters of the Air Force Special Activities Group in Washington could be housed together. They should, in any event, cooperate closely so as to provide unified direction of all phases of the project. For planning purposes, appropriate individuals in the two units will form a joint planning group. In the field, too, certain activities will have to be performed jointly. The Operations Section of each CIA Air Section and Air Force Special Flight would in fact have to establish a mission planning group made up of the two operations officers and including perhaps a weather officer from the Special Flight and an intelligence officer from the Air Section. On the administrative side, joint action would similarly be required on supply matters.

d. Detailed supply and logistic procedures will be developed as required. In general, however, they should be along the following lines:

(1) Each CIA Air Section will requisition directly on the CIA Project Headquarters for supplies, personnel, and services to be procured by the CIA. This Section will, however, requisition on the Air Force through the Flight assigned to the same field detachment for Air Force procured equipment, specialized personnel and services including transportation.

(2) Each Air Force Flight will follow usual Air Force procedures and Air Force channels in arranging for its own support and in obtaining Air Force procured items requisitioned by the CIA Air Section in the field.

(3) Procurement and recruitment by either the CIA or the Air Force for the purpose of this project other than that undertaken in response to requisitions from the field will presumably be initiated by the CIA Project Headquarters and the headquarters of the Special Activities Group, respectively. They can arrange

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between them (as at present) for procurement to be performed by one agency for the account of the other.

⑨. Organization Structure with Integrated Organization: Under this concept there will be a joint Project Headquarters in Washington and initially two and later three Detachments overseas, one stationed at each active base. The joint organization will be staffed in part with CIA personnel (including Air Force officers on assignment to the CIA) and in part with Air Force personnel on active duty with the Air Force. It will presumably be necessary for the Air Force to constitute a Special Activities Group as a unit to which all Air Force project personnel can be assigned, but this unit will have no separate organization and will in fact be merely a designation for Air Force personnel serving in the joint organization. In general, the functions of the project headquarters and the detachments in the field will be simply a combination of those already listed for the paralleling units that, under the alternative concept, would make up the two non-integrated organizations.

a. The joint headquarters will control all project activities and will be responsible specifically for continuing liaison with other departments, for the clearance as appropriate of operational plans, for the direction of continuing procurement, recruitment and development, and for operational planning. It will have three major sections:

(1) Operations, including operational planning, weather, intelligence, medical, operational communications and personnel functions with respect to civilian pilots.

(2) Materiel, including design and development, procurement, and legal and financial functions with respect to procurement.

(3) Administration, including organizational planning, security, fiscal procedures, personnel functions with respect to all regular CIA and Air Force personnel and civilian contract maintenance employees, and headquarters-to-detachment communications.

b. Each field detachment will be organized in roughly parallel fashion with an officer in charge, a general deputy who could also be operations officer, and a third senior officer in charge of administration and materiel. The Operations Officer will be in charge of air crews, mission planning, weather, medical (specialized), intelligence and targets, and communications (operational). The Materiel and Administration Officer will be in charge of maintenance, supply, communications (Message Center), personnel, security, adjutant activities,

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finance, and housekeeping as needed.

c. With a joint organization, it should still be possible for each Detachment to requisition locally from Air Force installations for items available in the field. Presumably, requisitions for all items to be supplied from the ZI would be drawn on the joint project headquarters which would arrange for procurement (or supply) by CIA or the Air Force as appropriate.

d. Financial procedures would have to be developed. Probably the pay of personnel and virtually all other disbursements would be made by either the CIA or the Air Force, although small joint cash accounts might be useful for certain local expenses overseas. There could, however, be centralized accounting for expenditures made on project account by both agencies so as to permit proper budgetary control and distribution of costs on whatever basis is agreed.

10. Phasing: Development, procurement, recruitment, and training for AQUATONE are proceeding satisfactorily at the present time with no formal organization in the Air Force and none in the CIA other than a centralization of responsibility for project activities. Although some similar centralization of responsibility will very soon be needed in the Air Force, it is probably unnecessary to establish separate project organizations with their own T/0s (or a joint project organization with its own T/0) for several more months. The timing of this step will be determined largely by the desirability of bringing into the project well before tests start in August 1955 most of the individuals who will occupy senior positions when the organization is fully established. On the other hand, an organization built along the lines of either of the two alternative concepts outlined above will not need to be fully staffed with three (or more) detachments in being for about eighteen months, that is, until at least twelve reconnaissance aircraft are operational (in addition to any held in the ZI for testing, training or modification.) Within these limits, the following tentative phasing is proposed:

a. Centralization of responsibility within the Air Force by 1 April 1955.

b. Activation of CIA and Air Force Headquarters units, or of a joint Headquarters unit, with definitions of functions of headquarters sections and assignment of specific individuals by 1 May 1955.

c. Completion of organizational plans for overseas detachments, selection and assignment of three senior officers for each of the first two detachments by 1 July 1955.

d. Majority of personnel of first two detachments to be recruited, assembled and trained at test site by 1 December 1955.

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e. First detachment to be activated at East Mediterranean base 1 February 1956 with operations to begin 1 March 1956.

f. The second detachment to be activated overseas 1 April 1956, to begin operations 1 May 1956.

g. The third detachment to be activated overseas by 1 August 1956, to begin operations 1 September 1956.